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NETWORKING: THE STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES AND THE MEDICI EFFECT

Networking is building effective connections and the right relationships with people. Nowadays, this is a necessity, especially in business, where networking is crucial. Networking is an opportunity. But opportunities just do not appear, they are tied to people. The people who surround you largely determine your potential. There is a widely known rule that you are successful because you have connections. It is about networking. There is no doubt that people from rich and successful families, by the will of fate, are lucky. But there are plenty of examples in our history, that poor start people have managed to achieve amazing results [1].

A huge amount of research shows that connections contribute to new career and business opportunities, broadening horizons, new knowledge, innovations, enhancement of status and authority, job satisfaction. LinkedIn conducted a study and found that 85% of vacancies are filled with networking.

Most people are mistaken in realizing that networking is not for them. People think too narrowly about their capabilities. Many are focused on profit and money, not noticing such less obvious things as gratitude and recognition. Often we do not attach importance to our experience. And we certainly have unique ideas or knowledge that would be very useful to our interlocutors, whoever they are. For example, young, unlike older ones, are more often aware of new trends and technologies. And the older ones also have something to offer, for example, to give wise advice or to allocate resources [1].

Oftentimes we focus on building strong relationships and ties with people. After all, the better we know someone and the stronger the relationship is, the more valuable it is for us. It's a bit counter-intuitive but in the workplace it is not the strong ties that can

be the most beneficial, in fact, weak ties, meaning acquaintances or people that you might not know that well, can be far more valuable [4].

In 1973 the sociologist Mark Granovetter published a scientific paper titled “The Strength of Weak Ties” in which he investigated the value of weak ties. Granovetter analogizes weak ties to being bridges which allow us to disseminate and get access to information that we might not otherwise have access to. In fact, Granovetter states that “all bridges are weak ties” [3, p. 71].

Most people are mistaken in thinking that the connections they already have are useful. Supposedly the old environment is the best. But, according to research, unique ideas and insiders arise precisely through weak ties. Those people who revolve around us are similar to us, they think the same way as we do, and they have the same principles and views on life. Communication with them is already oversaturated and it is unlikely that we will learn anything new from them. With strangers, we often talk about the important and unobvious things, and with relatives, as a rule, idle chatter.

Granovetter determined that weak ties help in finding a job and moving faster up the career ladder. This explains the theory of structural holes, developed by an American sociologist Ronald Stuart Burt. Structural holes are groups of people that are isolated from each other. They do not exchange information. Hole is the lack of communication between these groups, the gap structure. The more structural holes in your life, the more groups you unite. As a result, your power in society grows. You begin to have what others cannot. People from different groups may even know each other, but they are focused only on their own actions, so they do not know what is happening outside their group [4].

In our life, weak ties are much more than strong ones, which is confirmed by the theory of six handshakes. For some reason we are accustomed to communicate with old acquaintances. The reason is that it is hard for us to leave our comfort zone.

The theory of structural holes complements the Medici effect. Studies show that people connected by groups and those who have more contacts give rise to more creative ideas and original solutions to common problems. In Florence, in the XVth century, the Medici family gathered the most educated and talented people of their time. Sculptors and poets, artists and scientists, warriors and philosophers learned from

each other, destroying the boundaries between disciplines and cultures, creating true masterpieces at their junction. Frans Johansson called this phenomenon of combining incompatible things the Medici effect. The point is to create something new at the intersection of different ideas, breaking down associative barriers and revealing connections that seem unexpected at first glance [2, p. 18].

Pixar has combined the ideas of classical animation with information technology, abandoning the manual drawing of frames, in favor of the computer, freeing up time and resources for a deeper study of the plot and characters of the characters. The same is with Leonardo Da Vinci who erased the line between science and painting. SpaceX engineers used this approach and radically changed the way the rocket was created. As a result, they produced Falcon 1 for \$ 7 million, when the cheapest rocket on the market cost \$ 65 million.

In conclusion, it is worth saying that networking is a two-way road and any humans have something to offer. When you think more about what you can give and not take, networking will become less intrusive and will not look like self-promotion. If your environment has not changed for a long time, then there is not much sense from it. Move on, get out of your comfort zone and start talking to new people.

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